

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

## ENDING RESTRICTIONS ON LAW ENFORCEMENT'S ACCESS TO GUN TRACE DATA

April 13, 2007

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski  
Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Byrd and Chairwoman Mikulski:

We're writing in opposition to the damaging measures collectively known as the "Tiahrt Amendments," the riders that have been attached to annual Department of Justice appropriations bills for the last four years without a floor vote or full debate. The riders limit how police and other law enforcement authorities can obtain and use ATF crime gun trace information, which is a vitally important tool in combating illegal gun trafficking. We oppose the riders and any effort to make them permanent, and we urge you not to include them in the pending Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations bill for FY 2008. We would also respectfully request that you reject the alternative language suggested by the Department of Justice during this appropriations cycle.

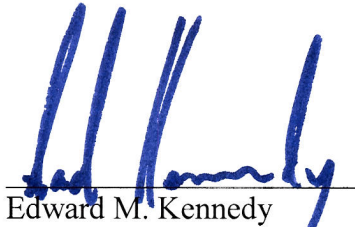
The Tiahrt Amendments frustrate the ability of law enforcement to stop gun crimes, and do so without providing a commensurate benefit to law enforcement agencies or to law-abiding gun owners. Asking law enforcement officers to combat gun crimes with these Amendments in place is like asking them to fight such crimes with one hand tied behind their backs. The Amendments place severe limitations on law enforcement by requiring that crime gun trace data be limited to crime guns used within the requesting jurisdiction and to specific criminal investigations or prosecutions. Prior to the Amendments, law enforcement agencies had broad access to aggregate crime gun trace data, which enabled them to develop more effective and multi-jurisdictional strategies to combat gun trafficking and illegal guns. Without access to such data, law enforcement is prevented from taking action against corrupt gun dealers and the traffickers they supply.

Proponents of the Tiahrt Amendments say that the restrictions are needed to protect the identities of undercover agents and the integrity of ongoing investigations. But there is no evidence that past ATF disclosures have adversely affected law enforcement. The ATF has previously disclosed crime gun trace data to the public, while withholding specific information that could compromise law enforcement investigations or threaten the safety of law enforcement personnel. The restrictions have done nothing to improve the safety of law enforcement personnel, and they have actually made their jobs more difficult and dangerous by hampering critical law enforcement functions.

A coalition of more than 182 mayors from 43 states have dedicated themselves to making America's cities safer by cracking down on illegal guns, and they oppose the Tiahrt Amendments. Opposition has also been expressed by a number of national and state law enforcement associations, including the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Police Executive Research Foundation, and several state law enforcement associations.

We join in supporting this coalition and in opposing these harmful restrictions. Rejecting the Tiahrt Amendments will make our streets, our communities and our nation safer. Our constituents and the law enforcement officers who put their lives on the line every day to protect all of us deserve no less. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

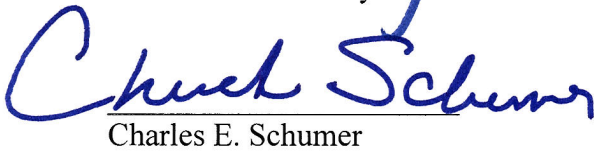
Sincerely,



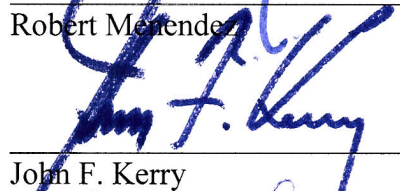
Edward M. Kennedy



Robert Menendez



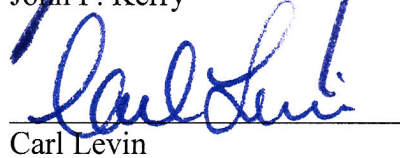
Charles E. Schumer



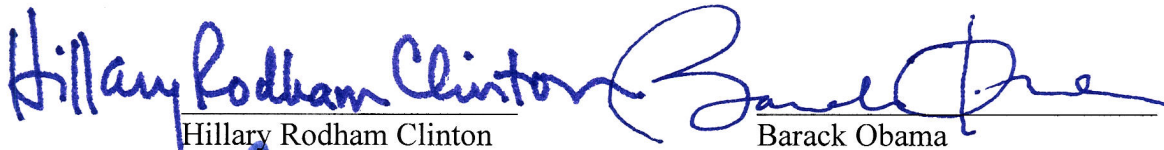
John F. Kerry



Richard J. Durbin



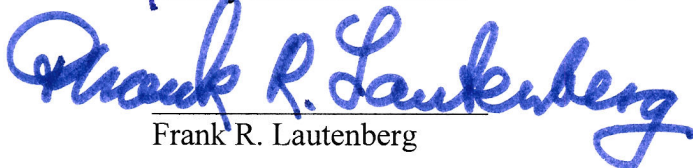
Carl Levin



Hillary Rodham Clinton



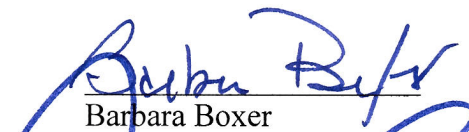
Barack Obama



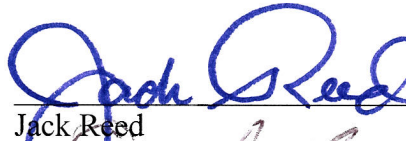
Frank R. Lautenberg



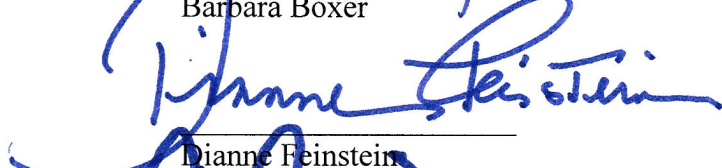
Benjamin L. Cardin



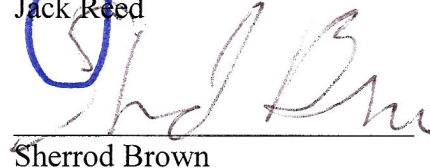
Barbara Boxer



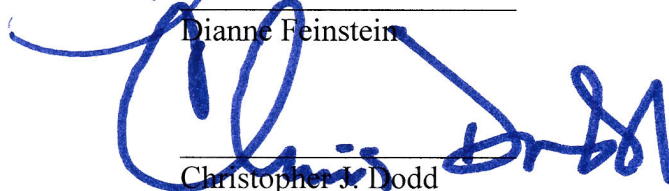
Jack Reed



Dianne Feinstein



Sherrod Brown



Christopher J. Dodd